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**GOVERNOR PATRICK ANNOUNCES \$13.4
MILLION IN RELIEF FUNDS FOR FISHING
INDUSTRY**

*Approval of state plan will allow for distribution of federal relief to
commercial fishermen harmed by federal groundfishing restrictions*

BOSTON – Monday, June 9, 2008 – Governor Deval Patrick today announced the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has approved the state's plan to distribute \$13.4 million in federal disaster relief to the Commonwealth's struggling commercial groundfish fleet – delivering aid to fishermen harmed by federal restrictions on groundfish harvesting by the end of August.

The Patrick Administration estimated regional economic losses of \$22 million due to federal regulatory restrictions on groundfishing. After the federal government denied a request to declare a "fishery resource disaster" in the Massachusetts groundfish industry, Senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry, with the support of the Commonwealth's congressional delegation, helped secure a federal appropriation of \$13.4 million to aid the struggling groundfishing industry.

“Our groundfishing communities have been hard hit by federal restrictions, and this economic relief is deeply needed,” said Governor Patrick. “I thank Senators Kennedy and Kerry and other members of the congressional delegation for obtaining these funds, and for working with my team to make sure it gets distributed to the people who need it. I look forward to working with them, and with the fishing community here, on a more sustainable approach to fisheries management that protects our natural resources and supports our coastal communities.”

“The Massachusetts fishing industry is a vital part of the Commonwealth’s economy,” Senator Kennedy’s spokeswoman Melissa Wagoner said. “Senator Kennedy is delighted that this long overdue relief is finally being made available to the fishermen. Those who have been harmed by the reductions in their days at sea mandated by Framework 42 should contact the Division of Marine Fisheries to apply for this well-deserved assistance.”

"Thousands of Massachusetts fishermen are finally getting the urgent relief they need," said Senator Kerry. "I am happy that as a result of the all of our hard work we are able to deliver the financial assistance that will enable thousands of our fishermen to get back on their feet and allow for the survival of one of our state's most significant and storied industries."

"I am pleased the federal government recognized the importance of helping a vital industry in the Commonwealth while we all work to create a long-term fisheries management plan that truly works," said House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi. "Governor Patrick, Secretary Bowles, Senate President Murray, legislators representing coastal regions and our congressional delegation deserve our praise and thanks for their continued hard work on this important issue."

“The availability of this relief funding is great news for the Massachusetts ground fishermen,” said Senate President Therese Murray. “They are an important part of our history and our economy, and we must do everything we can to protect their industry. This money will go a long way toward reducing the financial stress that our fishing communities and families have had to endure.”

The state Division of Marine Fisheries submitted a plan for distributing the \$13.4 million to NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Office on April 15th, following consultation with industry stakeholders, and public meetings held in Gloucester, New Bedford and Plymouth. NOAA approved the plan last week.

The disaster relief plan will allocate direct subsidies of more than \$11.3 million to qualified permit holders in the Commonwealth’s commercial groundfish fisheries. The state will distribute an additional \$1.5 million to fishing crew members, including a program to pay for health insurance coverage for crew members and their families.

Over the next two months, DMF will utilize federal and state fish permit records to determine who qualifies for relief payments. Applications will be mailed directly to permit holders as soon as Wednesday, June 11th. DMF will also post the application online so that others who believe they qualify can apply. Funds should be distributed by the end of August.

Applicants with federal groundfish permits will receive relief checks based on the total number of qualified vessels and the number of days at sea that each vessel has been allocated – approximately \$400 per day at sea will be awarded, with payments reaching \$36,000 per vessel. Those with state permits will receive a subsidy based solely on the number of qualified applicants; it's estimated these vessel owners will receive about \$7,500 each.

"I am very grateful to Governor Patrick, Senator Kennedy, Senator Kerry, and our representatives in Congress for obtaining this emergency assistance for our struggling fishing families," said Angela Sanfilippo, executive director of the Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership, an umbrella organization of fishing groups, and president of the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association. "This financial relief will be much appreciated by captains, crews, and families up and down the Massachusetts coast who make their livings from the sea."

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